

**WASHINGTON** – The three-member Task Force charged with examining the contest filed in Florida's 13th District met with the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on Friday to get an update on their investigation into the race between incumbent Representative Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., and challenger, Christine Jennings.

Dr. Nabajyoti Barkakati, a senior technologist with the GAO's Center for Technology and Engineering, testified that the GAO has completed "two out of four" of its objectives, having visited Sarasota County twice to examine the hardware, software, and administrative processes used in the 2006 election. Task Force Member, Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., asked Barkakati if, after reviewing the information it received, it had discovered "a smoking gun" that would have indicated the source of the undervote in the election. "So far I would say no," said Barkakati, who added that they were continuing work, after which "we may be able to say 'there is no smoking gun.'"

Through the execution of a non-disclosure agreement, the GAO was permitted access to proprietary information from the State of Florida and ES&S, manufacturer of the electronic voting machines used in Florida's 13th District. "It's a simple program," said Dr. Barkakati. When asked by McCarthy if the GAO agreed with the state audit and source code review of the machine, which found no malfunctions that could have caused the large percentage of undervotes, Barkakati said, "I found the exact same thing, it wasn't hard to read or understand."

When asked by the Ranking Republican Member of the full Committee, Vern Ehlers, R-Mich., about the "human factors" that may have played a part in the race in Florida, Dr. Barkakati said, "It is true that we have not addressed the human errors," said Barkakati, "It's very much possible that the whole reason was 'human factors.'"

Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., introduced a motion to authorize the Task Force to consider any GAO request received during the district work period that is determined by Task Force Chairman Charles Gonzales, D-Texas, to require concurrence of its Members. To preserve an open process, it was agreed that that any consultation would be open to the public through teleconference or web technology. No final disposition of the underlying election in Sarasota will be made under the procedure. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

"I am pleased with the progress that the GAO has made in its efforts to analyze the equipment

and processes used in the election in Sarasota County,” said McCarthy. “The GAO’s findings are an important ‘check and balance’ to the state audit in Florida. I look forward to receiving additional updates from the GAO as it continues its work, including an analysis of the impact that ballot design may have had on the undervote in Florida’s 13th District.”

For more information, please contact the Committee press office at (202) 225-8281.